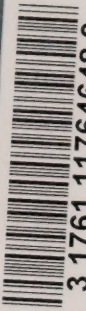


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## PROGRESS AGAINST POVERTY

The recession-driven rise in poverty during the first half of the 'eighties appears to have ended. Preliminary estimates for 1985 from Statistics Canada show a decline in the risk of poverty for the population as a whole. There were 298,000 fewer low-income Canadians in 1985 than 1984.


Welcome as they are, however, the new low-income statistics are no cause for complacency. The number and percentage of Canadians living below the poverty line were still higher in 1985 than at the beginning of the decade. Certain groups - one-parent families, the young and the single elderly (most of them widows) in particular - are very vulnerable to poverty. Child poverty remains a serious problem: more than a million youngsters under age 16, or one child in every five, were being raised in low-income households at last count. Men, who are less likely to be poor than women, enjoyed larger reductions in poverty from 1984 to 1985 than women.

Two factors help account for the reduction in the poverty numbers. One involves an improvement in social program benefits; the other, a reduction in unemployment.

Elderly Canadians have seen a substantial decrease in poverty over the past several years, thanks in large part to improvements in the retirement income system. Most recently, the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement rate for single seniors was increased by \$50 a month; the raise was phased in during the latter part of 1984 (\$25 a month in July and another \$25 a month in December), so 1985 was the first year when single pensioners enjoyed the full benefit of the raise.

Rising unemployment was the chief cause of the increase in poverty during the early 'eighties. The jobless rate has eased over the past few years and doubtless contributed to the recent decline in poverty. The national unemployment rate climbed from 7.5 percent in 1980 to 11.9 percent in 1983 but fell to 11.3 percent in 1984 and 10.5 percent in 1985.

The following pages highlight key trends and statistics on poverty in Canada. The analysis is based on income data from Statistics Canada; the most recent figures, for 1985, are preliminary estimates while statistics for earlier years are final. Past experience indicates that the preliminary figures tend to slightly overestimate the extent of low incomes, so the final 1985 data certainly will confirm the overall decline in poverty from 1984 to 1985.



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The 'number of poor' means the number of persons in a particular category with incomes below Statistics Canada's low income cut-offs (1978 base); the latter are explained in the National Council of Welfare's pamphlet 1986 Poverty Lines. 'Poverty rate' means the percentage of persons in a particular category with low incomes. For example, there were an estimated 3,916,000 poor Canadians in 1985 and they represented 15.9 percent of all Canadians (3,916,000 divided by 24.6 million).

The National Council of Welfare will publish a more comprehensive study of trends in poverty, income distribution and average incomes and earnings in the 1986 edition of Poverty Profile, to be released later this year.

**TABLE 1**

**Poverty Trends, 1969 to 1985**

	<u>Families</u>		<u>Unattached Individuals</u>		<u>All Persons</u>	
	<u>poverty rate</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>poverty rate</u>	<u>number</u>	<u>poverty rate</u>	<u>number</u>
1969	20.8%	1,002,000	42.8%	693,000	23.1%	4,851,000
1979	13.1	788,000	40.3	1,011,000	15.7	3,728,000
1980	12.2	745,000	39.6	1,041,000	15.1	3,475,000
1981	12.0	768,000	37.8	962,000	14.7	3,495,000
1982	13.2	869,000	37.4	998,000	16.1	3,897,000
1983	14.0	924,000	41.3	1,091,000	17.1	4,155,000
1984	14.5	972,000	37.8	1,026,000	17.3	4,214,000
1985	13.1	901,000	36.6	1,003,000	15.9	3,916,000
<u>percentage change</u>						
1969/85	-37.0%	-10.1%	-14.5%	44.7%	-31.2%	-19.3%
1980/85	7.4	20.9	- 7.6	- 3.7	5.3	12.7
1984/85	- 9.7	- 7.3	- 3.2	- 2.2	- 8.1	- 7.1





### **The General Picture (Table 1, Figures A and B)**

An estimated 3.9 million (3,916,000) men, women and children in this country were below the poverty line in 1985. This figure represents 15.9 percent of the total population of 24.6 million or one Canadian in every six.

901,000 families - 13.1 percent of the 6,856,000 total - lived on a low income in 1985. Over a million unattached individuals (1,003,000) or 36.6 percent of the 2,743,000 men and women who live alone or with non-relatives were below the poverty line.

Poverty increased steadily from 1980 to 1984 but fell in 1985. Figure A shows that the number of low-income Canadians rose from 3,475,000 in 1980 to 4,214,000 in 1984 and declined to 3,916,000 in 1985.

### **Family Poverty**

#### **a. all families (Figures C and D)**

The substantial increase in family poverty during the early 'eighties was reversed in 1985. An estimated 901,000 or 13.1 percent of all families had low incomes in 1985. These figures are higher than 1980 (when 745,000 or 12.2 percent of families were poor) but lower than 1984 (972,000 and 14.5 percent respectively). Figure C charts the trend in the number of low-income families and Figure D the rate of family poverty from 1980 to 1985.

#### **b. single parents and couples with children (Figures E and F)**

Most low-income one-parent families are headed by women. At last count (1985) an estimated 60.2 percent of female single-parent families - six in ten - were poor. Unlike most groups in the population, single mothers did not experience a reduction in poverty in 1985. Figure E shows that their poverty rate has risen steadily since 1981.

The risk of poverty for two-parent families increased substantially from 1980 (9.2 percent had low incomes) to 1984 (12.4 percent) but dipped considerably to 10.9 percent in 1985. Figure F plots the trend.

Single mothers are more than five times more likely to be poor than are families with two parents.

Larger families face a higher risk of poverty than those with few or no children. In 1985 the estimated poverty rate for childless couples was





8.7 percent, whereas the rate almost doubled to 16.9 percent for families with one child and 16.5 percent for those with two children. The poverty rate for families with three children was 24 percent, while 28.6 percent of families raising four or more children had low incomes in 1985.

**c. poor kids (Figures G and H)**

In 1985 an estimated 1,114,000 children under age 16 - 19.2 percent of all children - lived in low-income families. While these figures signal a welcome respite in the upward trend (in 1984 1,209,000 or 20.8 percent of Canada's children were poor), child poverty remains a major problem in this country. One child in five is growing up in poverty.

**d. families led by women and men (Figure I and J)**

An estimated 328,900 families headed by women - 42.0 percent of all female-led families - had low incomes in 1985. The comparable poverty figures for families with male heads were 572,100 and 9.4 percent. (There are more poor male-led families, even though their poverty rate is much lower than that of families led by women, simply because there are so many more families in general headed by men). Families led by women run over four times the risk of poverty as families with male heads.

**e. age of family head (Figures K and L)**

Young families face a high risk of poverty. One hundred thousand families with heads under age 25 - one-third of all young families - had low incomes in 1985, up from 30.1 percent in 1984 and 20.8 percent in 1980. There were 3,800 more low-income young families in 1985 than in 1984.

Figure K shows that the risk of poverty declines with the age of the family head until 54. Families headed by persons in the 55 to 59 age group have a higher poverty rate than those in the 45 to 54 category (10.4 percent as opposed to 9.0 percent). 13.8 percent of families headed by the near-aged (60 to 64) were below the low-income line in 1985. Elderly families have the second-lowest rate of poverty - 9.8 percent.

Figure L illustrates the significant progress made against poverty among elderly families. In 1980, 14.2 percent of families led by seniors had low incomes compared to 11.9 percent of non-aged families. Since then, their positions have reversed. In 1985 an estimated 9.8 percent of elderly families were poor, less than the 13.7 percent of non-aged families. However both aged and non-aged families had a lower rate of poverty in 1985 than 1984.





**f. age and sex of head (Figure M)**

Families headed by women under age 65 are much more apt to be poor than are those led by non-aged men. An estimated 46.4 percent of families with non-aged female heads were under the low-income line in 1985 compared to only 9.5 percent of families headed by men under 65.

The differential between the sexes is not as pronounced for elderly families. An estimated 15.9 percent of families led by women 65 and older had low incomes in 1985 compared to 9.0 percent for families with aged male heads.

**g. family poverty by province (Figure N)**

Figure N ranks the provinces according to their rates of family poverty. Newfoundland, at 20.7 percent, has the highest proportion of its families below the poverty line while Ontario, at half that rate (10.0 percent), has the lowest incidence of family poverty. The two provinces rank the same in their unemployment rates: Newfoundland's official jobless rate was a very high 21.3 percent in 1985 (double the national average of 10.5 percent) while Ontario, at 8 percent, had the lowest unemployment rate of all the provinces.

Family poverty increased from 1980 to 1984 in all provinces except Prince Edward Island and Manitoba. All ten provinces experienced a drop in family poverty in 1985.

**Poverty Among Unattached Canadians**

**a. all unattached individuals (Figures O and P)**

The number and percentage of unattached individuals (the term Statistics Canada uses to describe Canadians who live alone or with non-relatives) have gone down since 1983. In 1985 just over one million unattached individuals (an estimated 1,003,000) or 36.6 percent of all the unattached lived on low incomes. Unattached Canadians run almost three times the risk of poverty as persons who live in families (36.6 percent versus 13.3 percent). Figure O shows the trend in the number of low-income unattached individuals while Figure P plots the trend in the poverty rate.





**b. women and men (Figures Q and R)**

Poor unattached women (an estimated 627,000 in 1985) outnumber men (376,000) by a considerable margin. The poverty rate for unattached women is 41.6 percent compared to 30.4 percent for unattached men. Both groups have seen a reduction in poverty since 1983, as Figure R illustrates.

**c. age (Figure S)**

Young unattached Canadians run a very high risk of poverty (an estimated 47.9 percent were poor in 1985) followed closely by unattached persons aged 60 to 64 (47.3 percent) and the elderly (46.1 percent). Two in ten unattached individuals between the ages of 25 and 44 have low incomes, three in ten aged 45 to 54 and four in ten in the 55 to 59 age bracket.

**d. unattached individuals by age and sex (Figures T and U)**

Figure T illustrates the considerable progress that has been made in recent years in reducing poverty among the elderly unattached. However the gap between the sexes has not diminished; in fact, it was wider in 1985 than in 1980. At last count half of unattached elderly women were below the poverty line compared to only one-third of unattached men 65 and older.

The poverty rate for unattached men is much the same for those under age 65 (30.0 percent) and the elderly (33.2 percent). Unattached women, by contrast, are more likely to have low incomes in their old age: half of unattached women 65 and older were poor in 1985 compared to 36.3 percent of those under 65. Figure U illustrates the differences.

**e. poverty by province (Figure V)**

Figure V ranks the provinces by the percentage of their unattached residents who are below the low-income line. Unattached Quebecers have the highest poverty rate (46.3 percent) and unattached Albertans the lowest (29.7 percent). Most of the provinces are in the 30 to 40 percent range.

**The Feminization of Poverty (Tables 2 and 3, Figures W and X)**

Table 2 shows that women make up a larger percentage of the poor and run a higher risk of poverty than men in most categories. More than half (56.7 percent) of all low-income Canadians are female. Six in ten





low-income persons between the ages of 16 and 64 are women. Seven in ten of the elderly poor are women. Women constitute 82.7 percent of the unattached aged with low incomes.

Males make up a larger percentage of the poor in the following categories: children, aged persons in families and family heads. However men constitute an even larger proportion of the total (poor and non-poor) number of family heads, which means that they are underrepresented among the poor in this (as in most) categories. The proportion of low-income children who are boys (51.3 percent) is the same as the proportion of all children who are boys. The only category where men make up a larger percentage of the poor than all is elderly persons living in families; 56.0 percent of the aged poor in families are men compared to 51.6 percent of all the aged in families.

Table 2 also shows that women face a higher risk of poverty than men in almost every category. The last column gives the ratio of the female to the male poverty rate. For example, families headed by women are more than four times (4.47) more likely to be poor than are male-led families. In all but two categories the figure exceeds 1.00, indicating that women have a higher poverty rate than men. The poverty rate for boys is the same as for girls (19.2 percent). Only elderly men living in families have a higher poverty rate than women (8.8 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively).

Table 3 shows that women make up a larger proportion of the low-income population than the population as a whole. In 1985 56.7 percent of low-income Canadians were female compared to 51.0 percent of the total population. The 'proportionality index' simply divides women's share of low incomes with their share of all incomes for each category; figures over 1.00 indicate that women are overrepresented among the poor, which means that they make up a larger share of the poor than the total.

The proportionality index for all women is 1.11, so we know that women as a group are overrepresented among Canada's poor. The highest index - 3.38 - is for families led by persons under age 65; women represent 38.5 percent of poor families in this category but only 11.4 percent of all non-aged families. The only category in which women are underrepresented is elderly persons living in families; they comprise a smaller share of the poor (44.0 percent) than all the aged in families (48.4 percent).

The proportion of low-income families led by women has increased markedly over the past 25 years. Figure W plots the trend. In 1961 only 13.2 percent of poor families were headed by women. Their share climbed to 16.6 percent in 1969, 35.4 percent in 1980 and an estimated 36.5 percent in 1985. The remarkable rise in single-parent families (most of which are poor and led by women) is the major factor behind this trend.





Women have always accounted for the majority of unattached individuals with low incomes. Their share was little changed in 1985 (62.5 percent) from 1961 (62.0 percent). Figure X gives the long-term trend.

#### **Men Benefitted Most From the Reduction in Poverty (Table 4)**

Table 4 calculates the change in the low-income statistics for different categories. Overall, the number of poor Canadians fell by 298,000 from 1984 to 1985, which amounts to a 7.1 percent decrease.

Men generally enjoyed larger gains than women. The number of low-income men aged 16 to 64 went down by 8.7 percent from 1984 to 1985 compared to 5.7 percent for women in the same age group. The number of poor elderly men declined by a substantial 16.0 in contrast to only 1.3 percent for aged women.

There were 10.6 percent fewer low-income families led by men in 1985 than 1984 whereas the number of poor families headed by women decreased by just 1.1 percent. However the number of poor families headed by elderly women fell by a substantial 25.9 percent in contrast to 11.5 percent for those led by men 65 and older.

The number of unattached men with low incomes dropped by 4.5 percent in 1985 but the number of poor unattached women went down by less than 1 percent. There is a large difference between elderly unattached men and women: the number of poor unattached aged men fell by 20.9 percent whereas elderly unattached women living under the poverty line actually increased their numbers by 2.0 percent from 1984 to 1985.





**TABLE 2**

**Poverty Distributions and Rates,  
By Sex and Category, 1985**

Category	Percentage of Poor Who Are:		Poverty Rate		
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Ratio of Female to Male
All Persons	56.7%	43.3%	17.7%	14.1%	1.26
children	48.7	51.3	19.2	19.2	1.00
adults	57.3	42.7	10.5	8.2	1.28
aged	71.6	28.4	24.7	12.9	1.91
Persons in Families	54.6	45.4	14.4	12.2	1.18
children	48.7	51.3	19.2	19.2	1.00
adults	59.5	40.5	13.3	9.6	1.39
aged	44.0	56.0	7.4	8.8	0.84
all heads	36.5	63.5	42.0	9.4	4.47
aged heads	19.0	81.0	15.9	9.0	1.77
non-aged heads	38.5	61.5	46.4	9.5	4.88
Unattached Individuals	62.5	37.5	41.6	30.4	1.37
aged	82.7	17.3	50.1	33.2	1.51
non-aged	51.7	48.3	36.3	30.0	1.21

Note: The ratio divides the poverty rate for females by that for men for each category. The higher the figure, the larger the poverty gap between women and men.

Children are under 16, adults 16 to 64 and aged 65 and older.





**TABLE 3**

**Women as a Percentage of Low-Income  
and All, by Category, 1985**

Category	Low-Income	All	Proportionality Index
All Persons	56.7%	51.0%	1.11%
children	48.7	48.7	1.00
adults	57.3	50.9	1.13
aged	71.6	56.8	1.26
Persons in Families	54.6	50.5	1.08
children	48.7	48.7	1.00
adults	59.5	51.4	1.16
aged	44.0	48.4	0.91
all heads	36.5	11.4	3.20
aged heads	19.0	11.4	1.67
non-aged heads	38.5	11.4	3.38
Unattached Individuals	62.5	54.9	1.14
aged	82.7	75.9	1.09
non-aged	51.7	46.9	1.10

Note: Proportionality index: figures over 1.00 indicate that females are overrepresented among the poor; figures under 1.00 mean that they are underrepresented among the poor.

Children are under 16, adults 16 to 64 and aged 65 and older.



**TABLE 4**

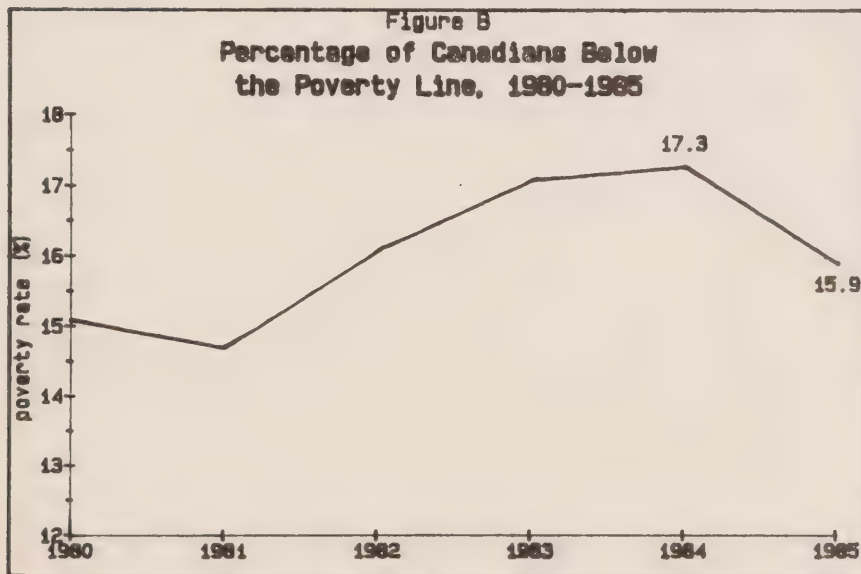
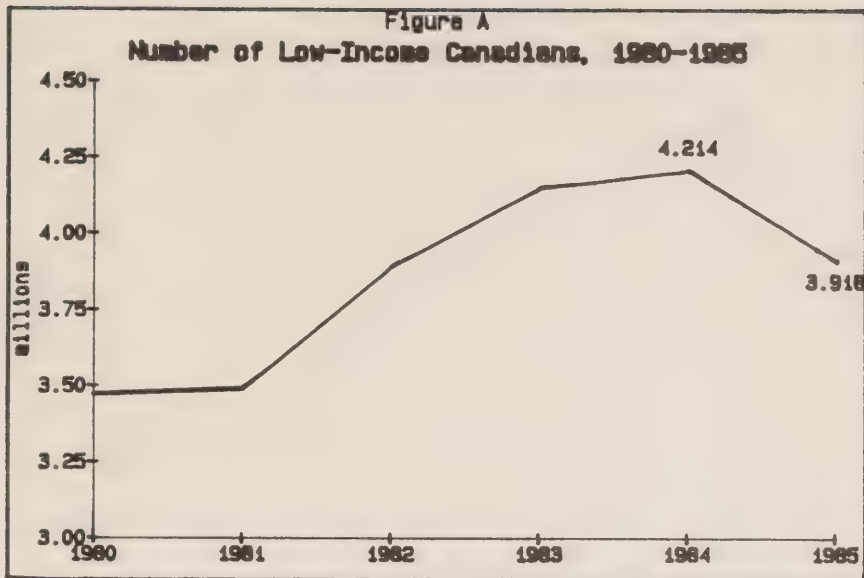
**Change in Number of Low-Income  
Canadians, by Category, 1984-1985**

<u>Category</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>Change</u>	
			<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
All persons	4,214,000	3,916,000	- 298,000	- 7.1%
children	1,209,000	1,114,000	- 95,000	- 7.9
adults	2,484,000	2,311,000	- 173,000	- 7.0
women	1,403,500	1,324,200	- 79,300	- 5.7
men	1,080,500	986,800	- 93,700	- 8.7
aged	521,000	490,000	- 31,000	- 6.0
women	355,300	350,800	- 4,500	- 1.3
men	165,700	139,200	- 26,500	-16.0
Families	972,000	901,000	- 71,000	- 7.3
female head	332,400	328,900	- 3,500	- 1.1
male head	639,600	572,100	- 67,500	-10.6
head under 25	96,200	100,000	+ 3,800	+ 4.0
adult head	768,900	706,400	- 62,500	- 8.1
aged head	106,900	94,600	- 12,300	-11.5
women	24,300	18,000	- 6,300	-25.9
men	82,600	76,600	- 6,000	- 7.3
Unattached				
Individuals	1,026,000	1,003,000	- 23,000	- 2.2
women	632,000	626,900	- 5,100	- 0.8
men	394,000	376,100	- 17,900	- 4.5
under 25	224,700	226,700	+ 2,000	+ 0.9
adults	440,100	426,300	- 13,800	- 3.1
aged	360,200	350,000	- 10,200	- 2.8
women	283,200	288,800	+ 5,600	+ 2.0
men	77,000	60,200	- 15,800	-20.5

Note: Children are under 16, adults 16 to 64 and aged 65 and older.

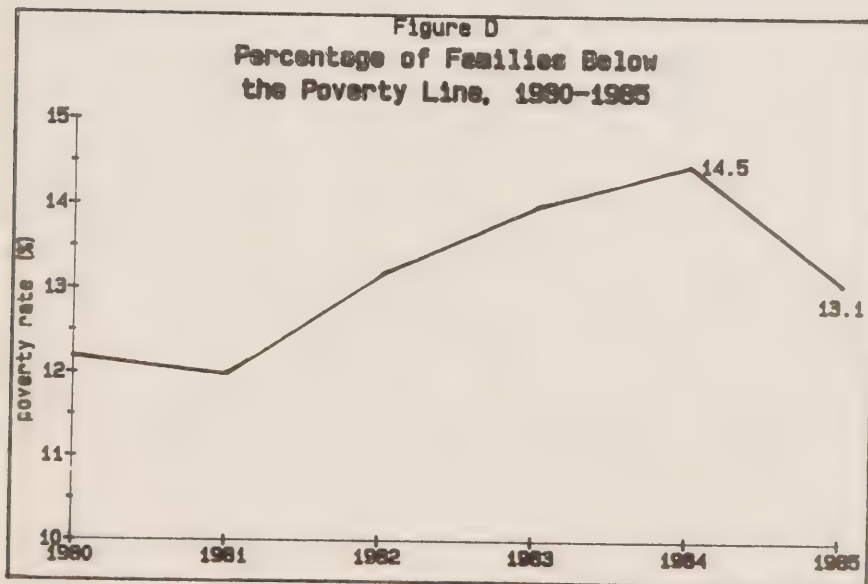
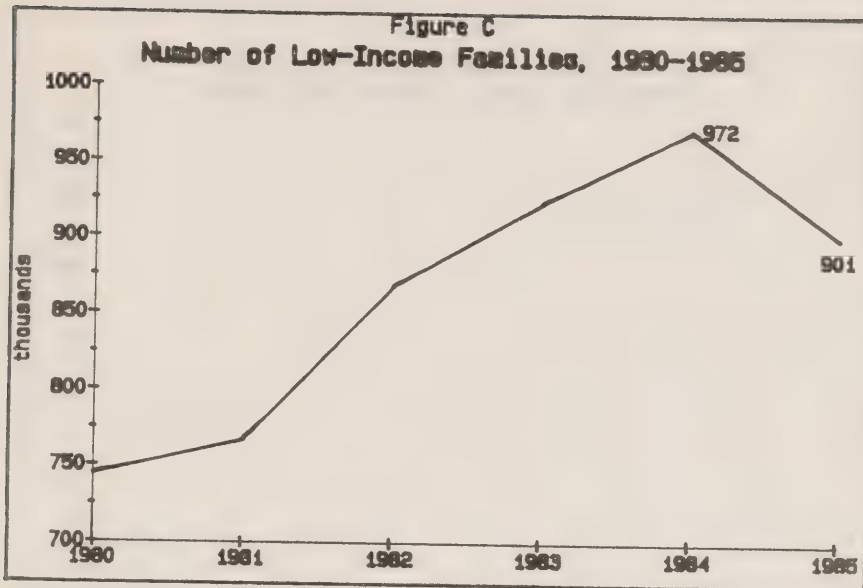




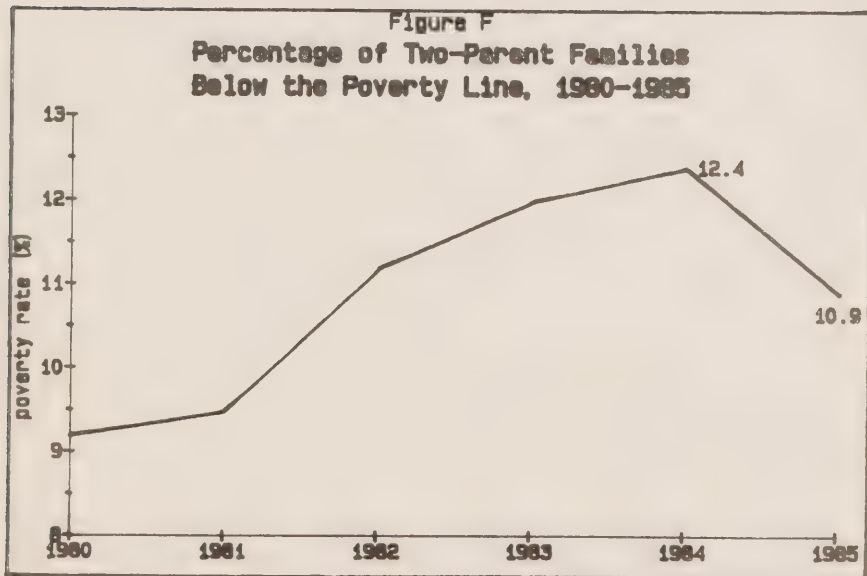
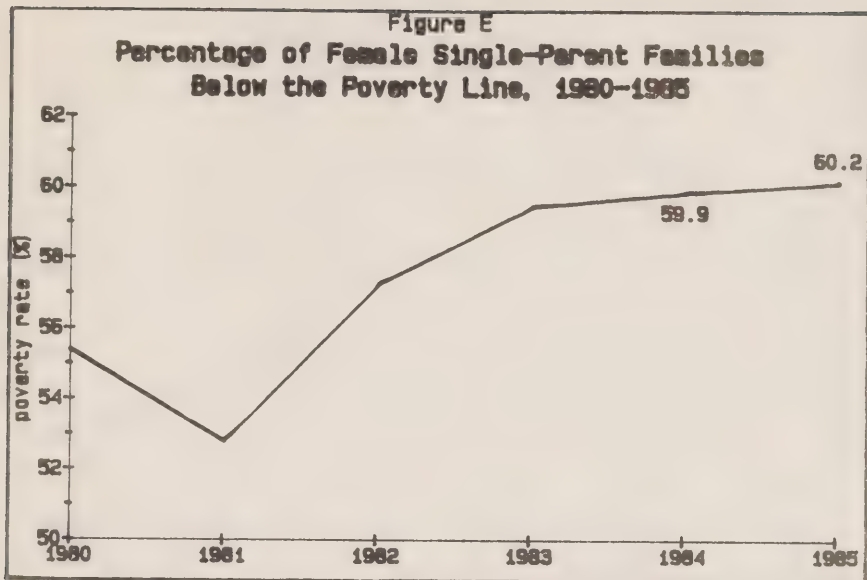






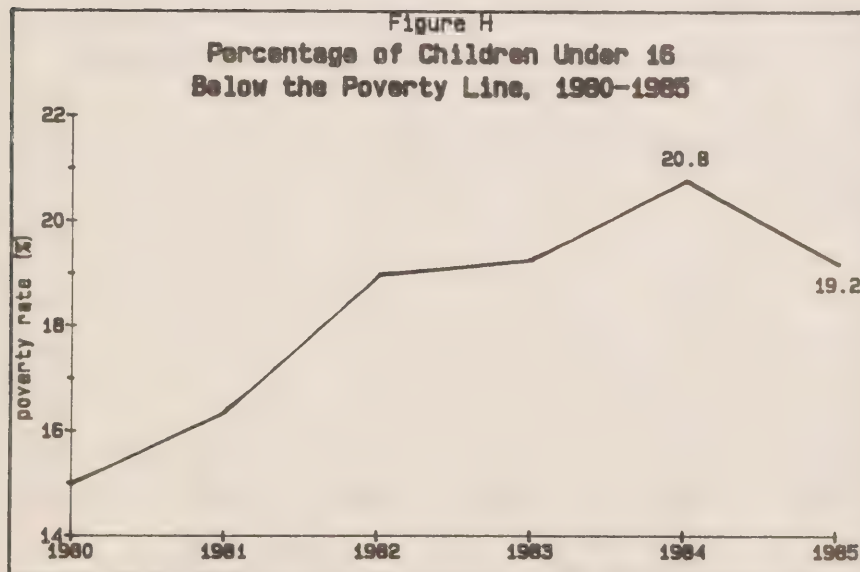
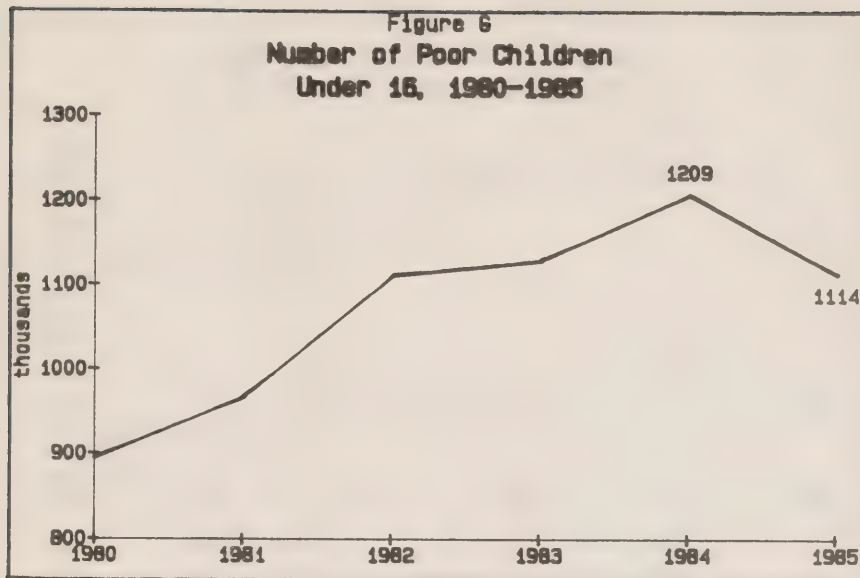
















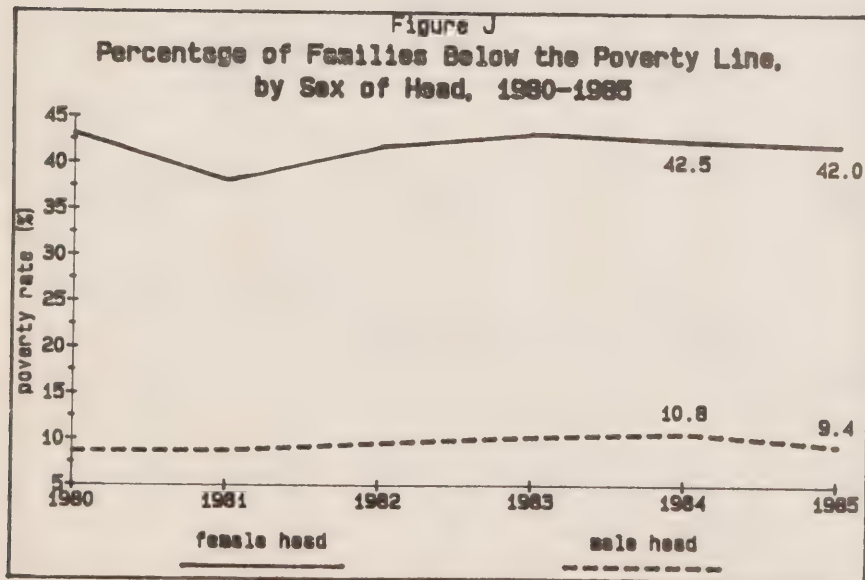
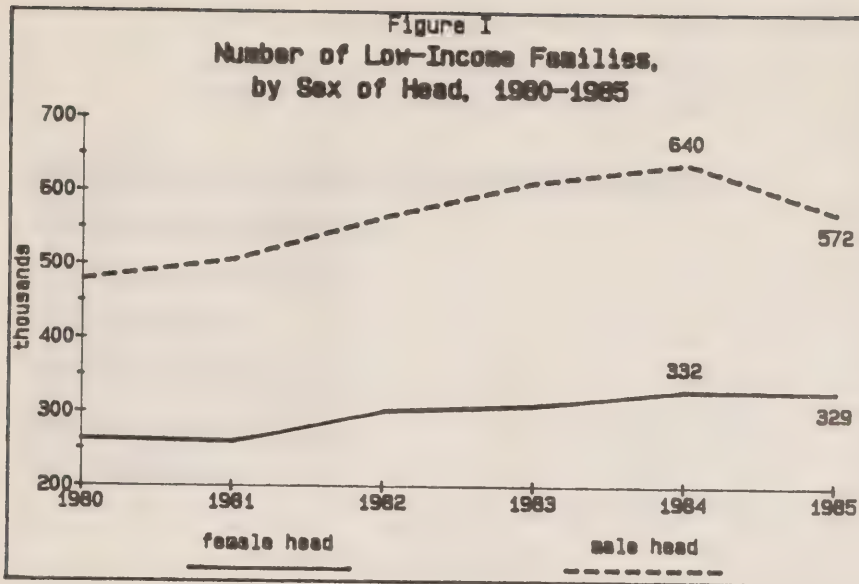




Figure K  
Percentage of Families Below the  
Poverty Line, by Age of Head, 1985

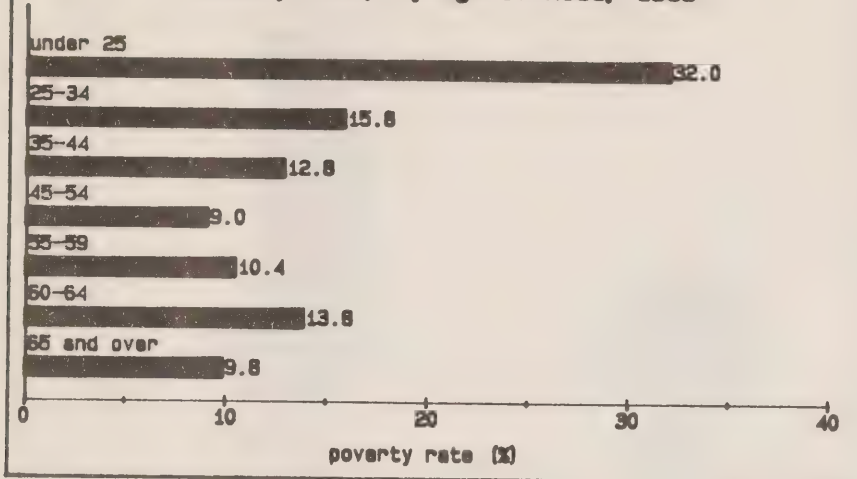
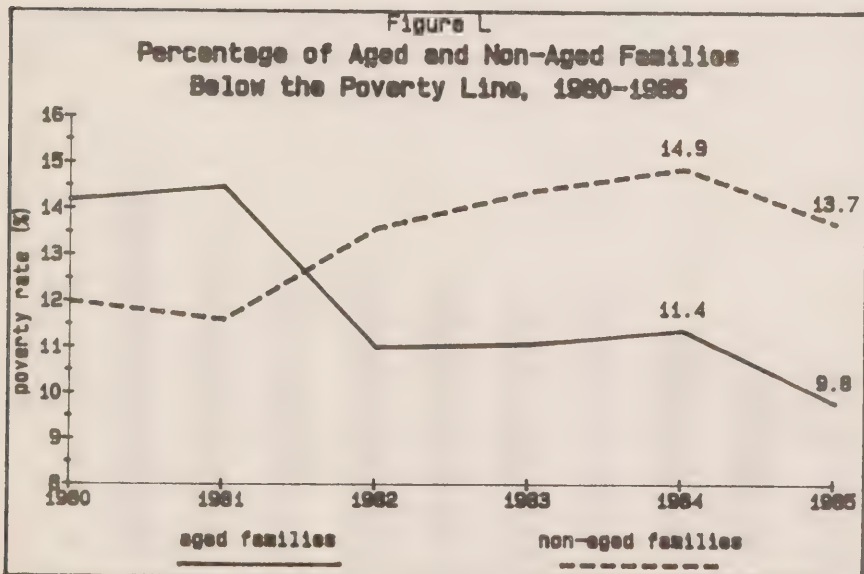
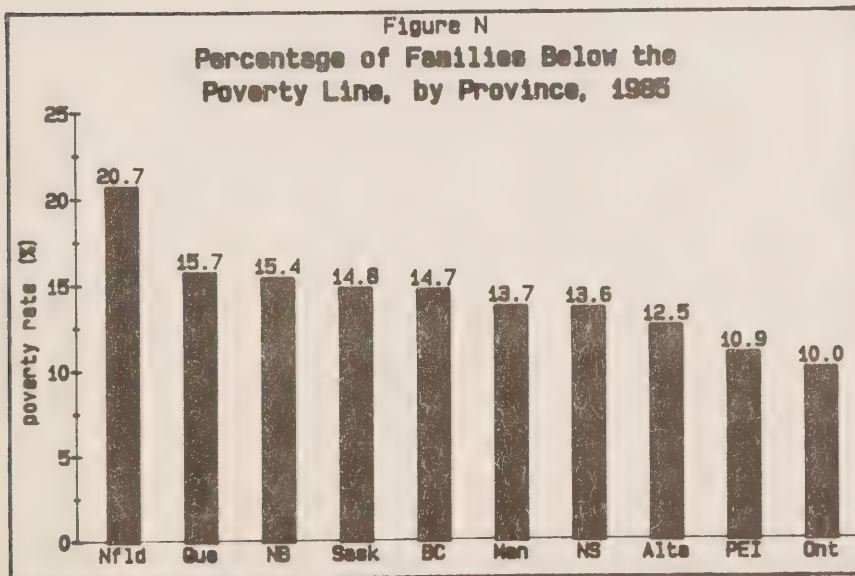
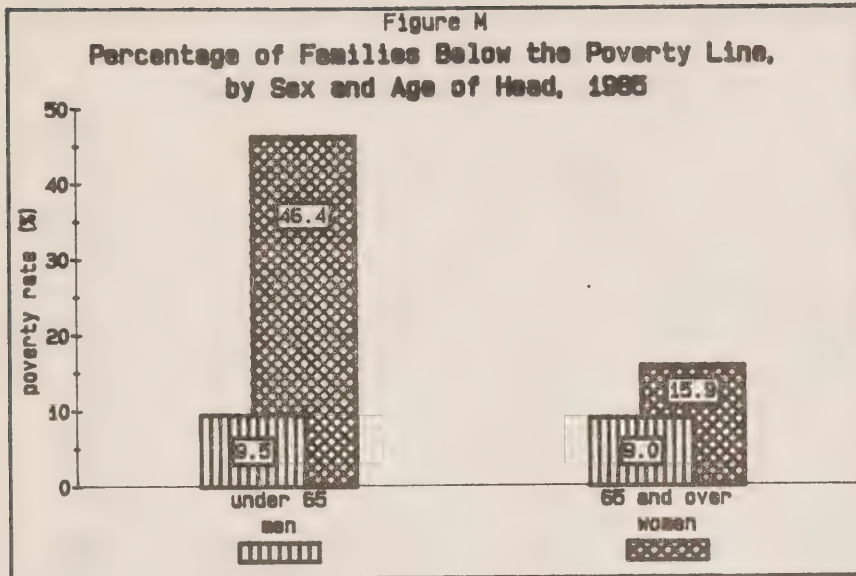


Figure L  
Percentage of Aged and Non-Aged Families  
Below the Poverty Line, 1980-1985

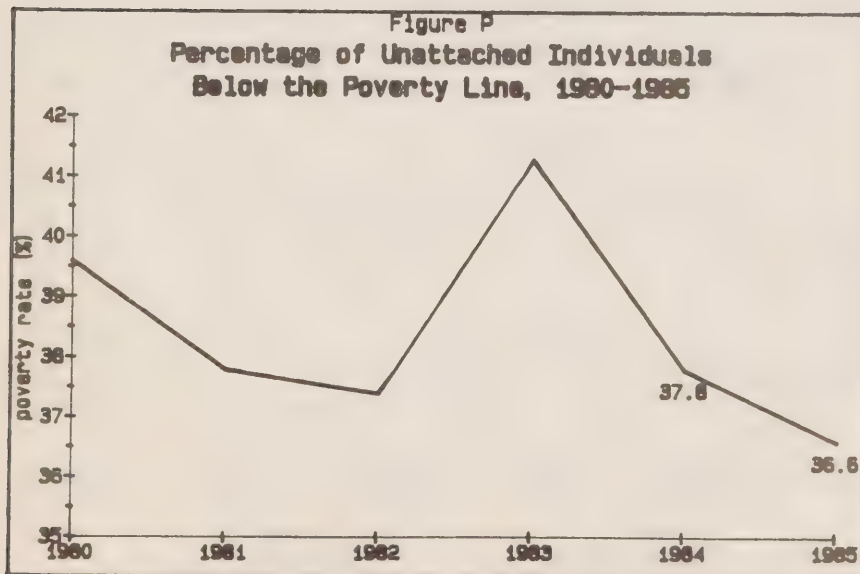
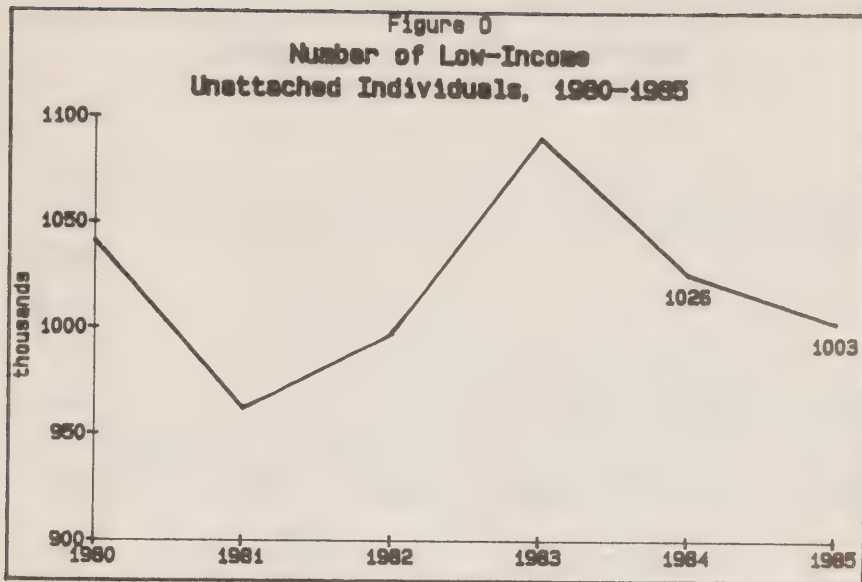
















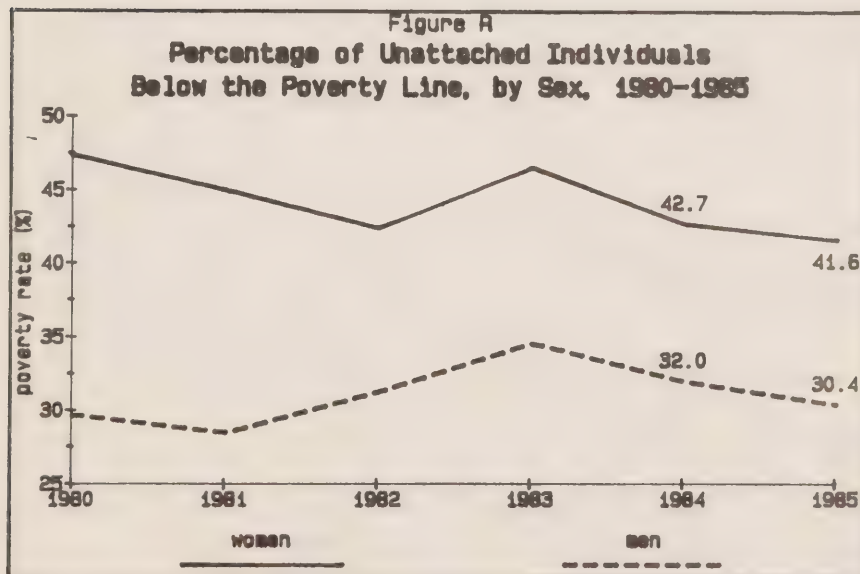
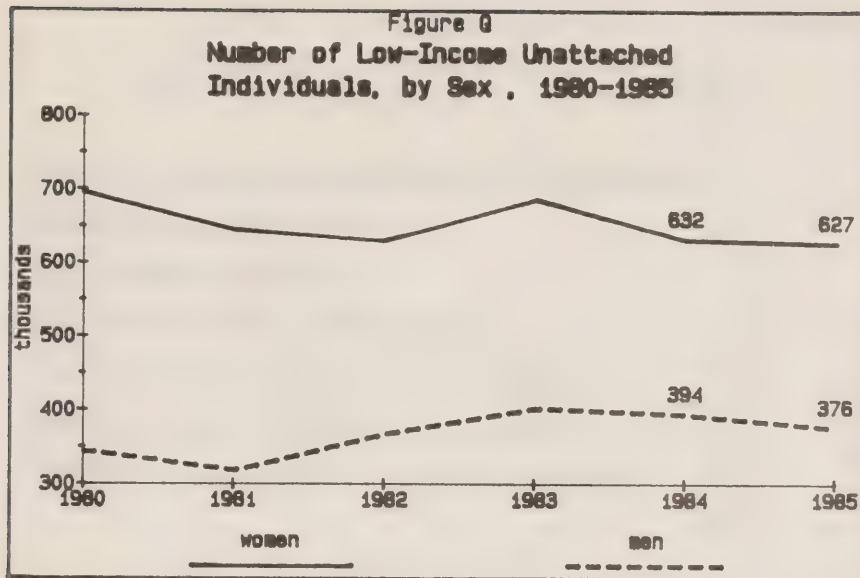




Figure S  
Percentage of Unattached Individuals  
Below the Poverty Line, by Age, 1980-1985

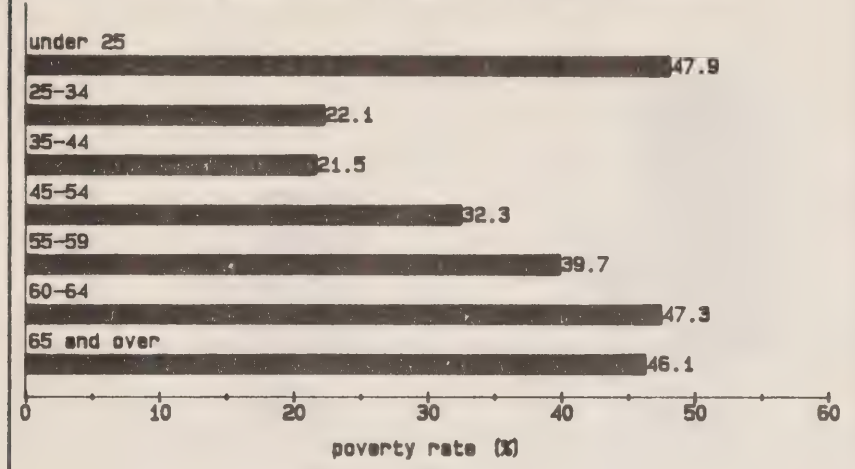
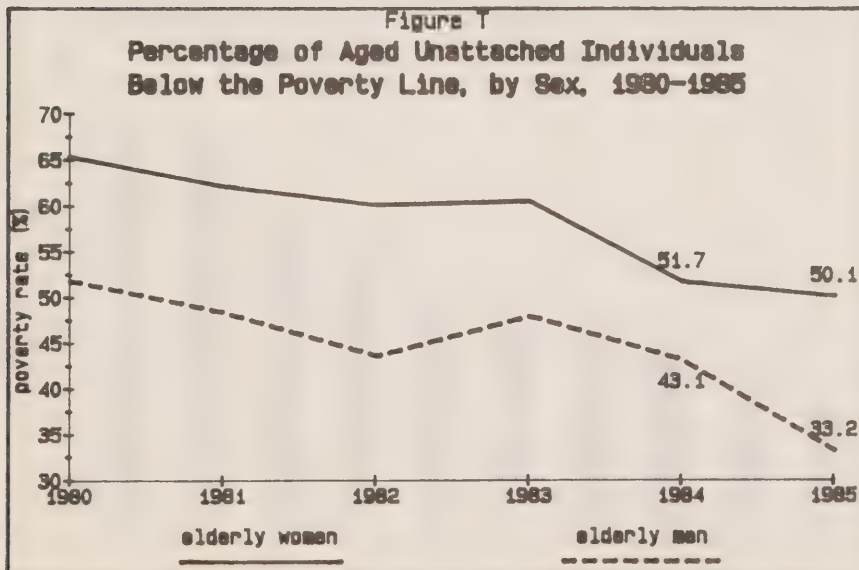
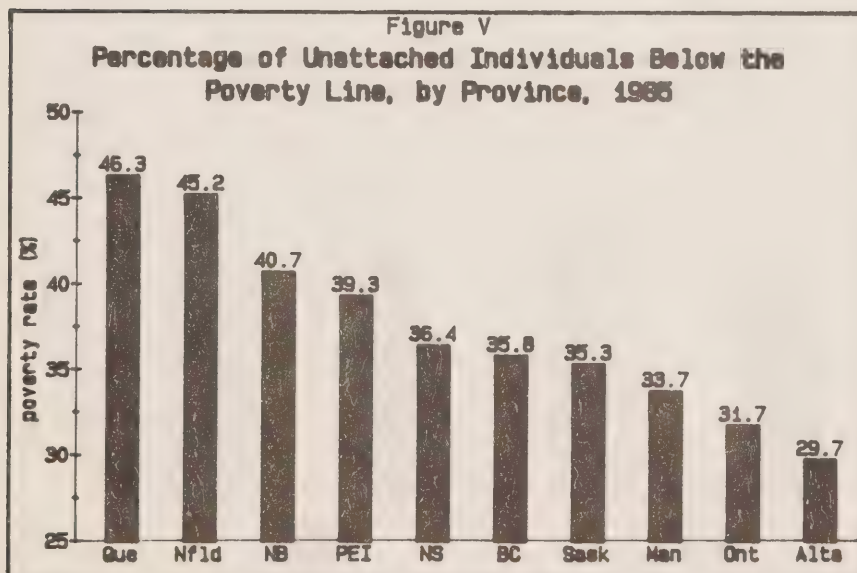
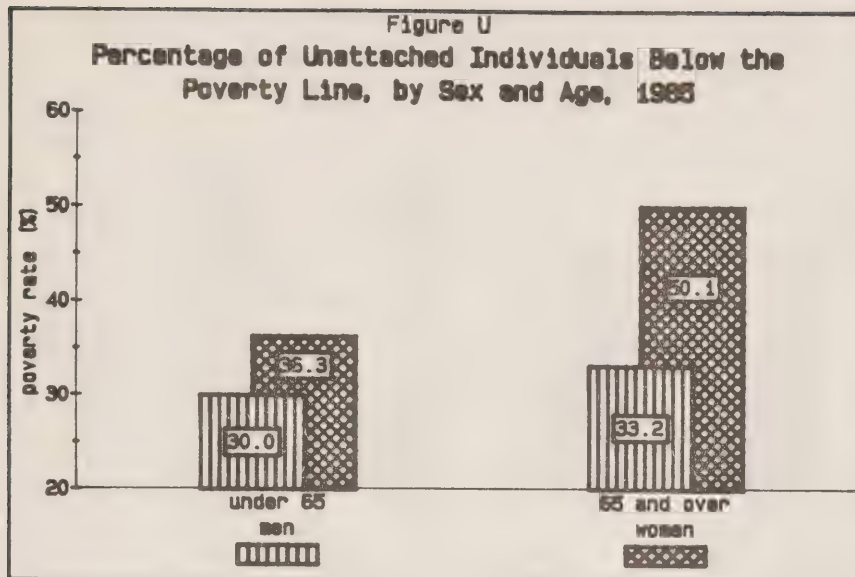


Figure T  
Percentage of Aged Unattached Individuals  
Below the Poverty Line, by Sex, 1980-1985

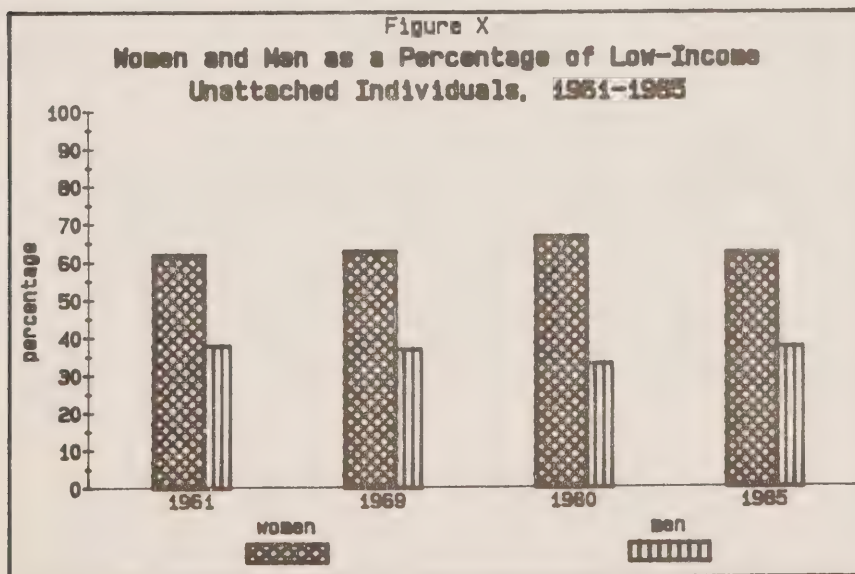
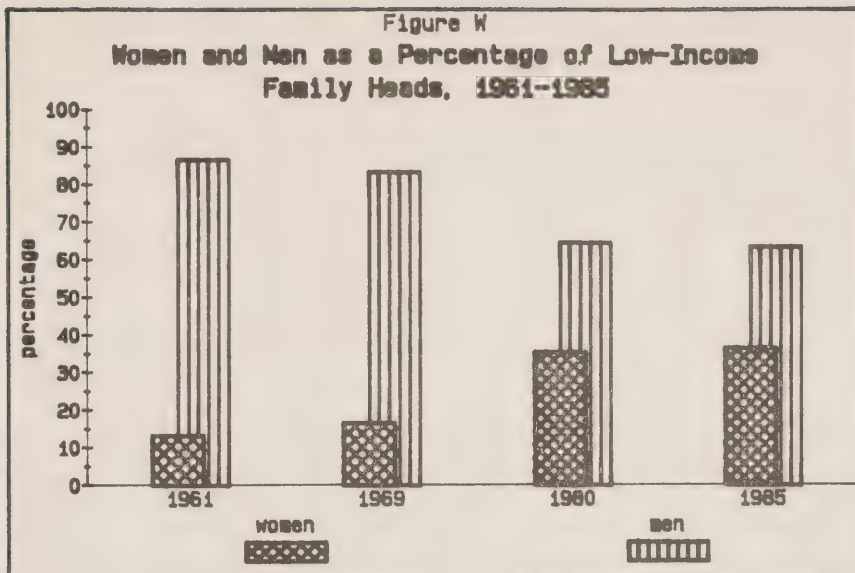
















**national council  
of welfare**



**conseil national  
du bien-être social**

brooke claxton building, ottawa

(613) 995-6265

613-995-6265

CAI  
HW700  
86P61

October 31, 1973

Dear Reader:

In the past year or so, but particularly in recent months, we have experienced a very substantial growth in our mailing lists. For the most part this has resulted from requests by individuals and organizations for copies of particular National Council of Welfare reports together with the request that they be included in our mailings of future reports.

As the number of requests for our reports has grown, and our mailing list expanded accordingly, our interest in obtaining some sort of feedback from those receiving our reports has also grown. And it is this feedback that we are seeking with this letter.

The National Council of Welfare consists of 21 members. Some are active in welfare rights groups, low income tenants' groups, native people's groups and other organizations of low income citizens. Other members are active in fields such as social agency activity, social work education, poverty law services, and trade unionism. The subjects of our reports and the positions taken in them reflect the views of the 21 members and these, in turn, reflect their experiences in the diverse sectors from which they come.

In the enclosed questionnaire we have asked a number of questions, most of them dealing with our three most recent reports. Although there have been many previous reports issued by the Council, we have picked only the three most recent ones to ask about for two reasons. First, being of three different sorts, they seemed fairly representative of the various kinds of studies we have done in the past or



might do in the future. Second, being the most recent, they seemed most likely to be freshest in people's minds

In March we published *One Child, One Chance*, a report on nutrition and the needs of children, particularly poor children. It was directed to government policy-makers and to the general public.

In August we published *The Press and the Poor*, an examination of how Canada's newspapers cover poverty. It was again directed to the general public, of course, but in this case to private rather than public (governmental) policy-makers - those who make the decisions on newspapers across the country.

The enclosed report is quite different from either of these. It contains a statement directed to government policy-makers in its foreword, but the bulk of the report is aimed at filling at least part of the need which our message to government describes. It is a guide prepared to assist low income organizations in one dimension of their activities.

We would very much appreciate your taking the few minutes necessary to answer the questions on the enclosed form. A postage paid return envelope has been included. There is a place on the form for your name, but if you would rather send us your views anonymously, please feel free to do so. The important thing from our standpoint is that we hear from as many of those who receive our reports as possible, so we can know your views and use them to help us plan our future work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. Shifrin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leonard Shifrin  
Director



CA)  
HW 700  
- 86P61

1. Did you receive and read One Child, One Chance?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) Did you find it of interest?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(b) Were you substantially in agreement with the views it expressed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(c) Was nutrition a subject in which you had a strong previous interest?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(d) Was your interest in this subject increased or your attitude toward it changed in any way as a result of this report?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2. Did you receive and read The Press and the Poor?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) Did you find it of interest?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(b) Were you substantially in agreement with the views it expressed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(c) Was the media a subject in which you had a strong previous interest?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(d) Was your interest in this subject increased or your attitude toward it changed in any way as a result of this report?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Have you read, or do you plan to read, the Bookkeeping Handbook for Low Income Citizen Groups?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) Are you presently, or have you in the past, been involved in any way (however unofficially or informally) with a low income group in your community?

Yes ☐ No ☐





(b) Do you feel this report will be helpful to such groups?

Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Which of these three reports has been of greatest interest to you?

☐ One Child, One Chance

☐ The Press and the Poor

☐ Bookkeeping Handbook

5. Have you passed any of our reports on to others for them to read?

One Child, One Chance Yes ☐ No ☐

The Press and the Poor Yes ☐ No ☐

Bookkeeping Handbook Yes ☐ No ☐

6. What were their comments?

7. Have you found other uses for our reports? (If so, please describe them.)

8. What subjects would you be most interested in seeing the Council study and report on in the future?



9. Are you a:

- ☐ member of a low income citizens' group
- ☐ member of a volunteer organization in the social service field  
other than a poor people's group
- ☐ social agency employee
- ☐ government employee
- ☐ teacher (what field \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ student (what field \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ lawyer
- ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_









